



Productivity

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Predictive v. Reactive Management Styles

Many managers believe their job is to resolve problems that arise. While this is true, the more important part of a manager's job is to keep problems from arising. This is the difference between reactive management--which solves problems as they occur, and predictive management--which prevents problems from occurring in the first place.

Reactive Management

Reactive management is a management style that is much admired for its ability to quickly get resources back into production, whether those resources are people or equipment. If you are good at reactive management, you are:

- • Decisive and able to act quickly,
- • Able to determine the root cause of events,
- • Creative and able to develop multiple solutions to a problem,
- • Innovative and able to find new ways to solve problems, and
- • Calm and in control in the midst of "crisis".

A manager who excels at reactive management is able to remain calm, quickly analyze a problem, and find its root cause. Rather than getting lost in the symptoms, they are able to see possible solutions, some proven and some new, and select the best one. They are equally quick at implementing a solution to resolve a problem.

A reactive management style is desirable because it supports rapid problem resolution and reinstates productivity quickly. However, reactive management pales in comparison to predictive management, which offers a big picture view that can reduce the number of problems that require reactive management.

Predictive Management

The more problems that can be prevented through predictive management, the fewer problems that will need to be solved through reactive management. If you are good at predictive management, you are:

- • Thoughtful and analytical,
- • Not likely to go chasing after the current panic,
- • Aware of important as well as urgent issues,
- • Able to identify patterns in data and operations,
- • Focused on problem causes rather than fixes, and
- • Able to keep the big picture in mind.

A manager who is good at predictive management is sufficiently detached that they can identify conditions that lead to problems and implement procedures to reduce or eliminate problems. Rather than being concerned about a problem, they are able to relate current conditions to earlier information and predict when problems might arise.

A predictive management style is beneficial because the more problems that can be prevented through predictive management, the fewer resources that will need to be spent on reacting to problems. Predictive management does not replace reactive management, but reduces the need for it.

Developing Predictive Management Skills

How does a manager get better at predictive management? The best way is through practice using the exercise that follow:.

- • Think about a problem that has been ongoing within your organization.
- • When did it happen recently?
- • What caused it?
- • What warning signs were there before it happened?
- • What was done to fix it?
- • What could have been done to prevent it?
- • What can be done to reduce the chances of it happening again?
- • Monitor the warning signs you noted above.
- • When those signs appear again, apply the previous solution.
- • Evaluate the results and adjust as needed.

The more you practice predictive management the, better you will get at it. You will still need to use reactive management at times, but not as much. More of your resources will be directed toward getting things done, rather than on fixing problems, and you'll have more time to think about and prevent future problems from arising.

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